

4 March 1953

At 0515 on 4 March, Radio Moscow announced to Europe that Stalin was in critical condition as the result of a stroke on the night of 1-2 March. Dissemination of the news within the USSR followed at 0530. The eight doctors in constant attendance who have announced they will issue frequent bulletins, are significantly under the supervision of both a new Minister of Health and the present chief of the Kremlin Medical Department, believed to be an MGB man.

It should be noted that at present U. S. intelligence is completely dependent on official Soviet releases as to the state of Stalin's health and the timing and nature of his illness. Stalin was last seen by a non-Soviet representative on 17 February when he gave an audience to the Indian Ambassador. The possibility can not be excluded that his illness has been carefully concealed and that his health deteriorated some time ago.

With regard to Stalin's expected early demise, the present political situation must be viewed in the light of changes made at the 19th Party Congress. The new blood taken into the Presidium and Secretariat is believed to have strengthened the position of Malenkov at the expense of his oft-rumored rivals. The present vigilance campaign resulting from the revelations of the "doctors' plot" might well give Malenkov the opportunity of eliminating his actual or potential rivals.

There has been no report of any non-Soviet individual personally acquainted with Stalin having seen him since mid-1952 when he was interviewed by the departing Indian Ambassador. Since mid-1952, all those who have seen Stalin have emphasized his physical fitness and mental alertness.